



Williamsburg

United Methodist Church

Serving Historic
Williamsburg Virginia
Since 1772

Dear Friend in Christ,

Not long after the Coronavirus pandemic swept aside in-person worship in churches across Virginia, Bishop Lewis instructed that each church in our Virginia United Methodist Conference create a "Healthy Church Team," comprised of those who would be entrusted with the weighty task of evaluating how a particular local church could reengage safely in worship and ministry to its community. Here at Williamsburg UMC, our Healthy Church Team, under the leadership of Council Chair Betsy Harrison, began meeting weekly to create a plan to do just that – to enable our doors to open and to keep people safe as they chose to return. Beginning on October 11, our church resumed limited in-person worship in the sanctuary, and has continued for the past six Sundays while providing a livestreaming option. Each day, team members monitored new infections in Williamsburg City and James City County.

On November 19, the Team met and **voted to suspend in-person worship in our building, effective immediately.** The 11 AM service on Nov. 22 will thus be livestreamed/recorded only.

What has changed? Examining the 7-day "average cases per 100,000 population," since the end of October COVID cases have doubled in JCC and tripled in Williamsburg; our city now has a higher rate of COVID-positive persons than most other areas of the Commonwealth. This data, combined with the likelihood of the virus being spread by those traveling and congregating with others over the Thanksgiving holiday, led us to determine that for the present we will pursue livestreamed services and parking-lot worship in order to safeguard the well-being of our members and friends.

This is a decision which our team did not take lightly. We will continue to monitor Virginia Department of Health data, and when the numbers offer greater encouragement, we will resume an in-person, sanctuary-worship option. Accordingly, funerals will now be limited to 25 persons in attendance, presumably close family, with the service made available on-line to all interested (and a recording placed on our website by request of family).

The Church is not closed, and remains open during the week to support the busy life of our faith-family and our strong commitment to our larger Williamsburg community. Classes, teams and committees are encouraged to meet by Zoom, but presently have the option to gather (masked and distanced) in groups of 25 persons or fewer.

We have amassed eight months of adaptive expertise while living under the threat of this virus. In that time we have rejoiced in a Baptism, welcomed new members by transfer, celebrated Holy Communion (in-cars!) and witnessed the Confirmation of a dozen new disciples. We have born witness to God's goodness, and have plans to rejoice in the Good News of Advent and Christmas. Thus do we go forward together, praying for those who are ill, those who treat and care for them, and those who labor each day for the eradication of this pandemic. That day *will* come.

Until then, the best of all is God is with us!

Peace of Christ,

Dave

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